

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1                   1.       A central server configured to promote products over a computer  
2 network comprises:  
3                   a processor configured to receive a specification of a promotion for a product  
4 from a first computer, configured to create an electronic incentive in response to the  
5 specification, configured to transfer the electronic incentive to an application server across  
6 the computer network, the application server coupled to a merchant server, configured to  
7 receive usage data of the electronic incentive from the application server, the usage data  
8 determined in response to a promotion usage condition indicated by the merchant server, and  
9 configured to generate a report in response to the usage data;  
10                  a memory coupled to the processor, the memory configured to store the  
11 electronic incentive, configured to store the usage data, and configured to store the report;  
12                  wherein data associated with the electronic incentive is transferred from the  
13 application server to the merchant server;  
14                  wherein the merchant server specifies rendering of the data associated with the  
15 electronic incentive; and  
16                  wherein the promotion usage condition is indicated in the merchant server  
17 when a user coupled thereto fulfills requirements of the electronic incentive.

1                   2.       The central server of claim 1 wherein the electronic incentive  
2 comprises an offer selected from the group: cents off, percent discount, price point, buy X get  
3 Y free, solution selling, promotion content.

1                   3.       The central server of claim 1 wherein the electronic incentive  
2 comprises a delivery method selected from the group: non-targeted, targeted category,  
3 targeted usage, targeted brand, targeted market.

1                   4.       The central server of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive  
2 comprises a tracking code.

1                   5.       The central server of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive  
2 comprises calendar data selected from the group: effective data, expiration date.

1                   6.       The central server of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive  
2 comprises a network computer address.

1           7.       The central server of claim 4 wherein the usage data from the  
2 application server comprises data selected from the group: demographic data of the user, a  
3 geographic indicator of the user, a number of products purchased by the user, currency value  
4 of products purchased by the user, a list of products purchased by the user, the tracking code.

1           8.       A merchant server coupled to a client system comprises:  
2 a processor configured to request promotions from an application server  
3 coupled to the merchant server, configured to receive a description of a promotion from the  
4 application server, the description including pre-conditions and a user benefit, configured to  
5 determine an output representation of the promotion in response to the description of the  
6 promotion, configured to transmit the output representation of the description to a client  
7 system for display to a user, configured to receive a selection of at least one item from the  
8 client system, configured to transmit the selection of the at least one item to the application  
9 server, configured to receive an indication that the user is provided with the user benefit from  
10 the application server, and configured to store in a log a record that the user is provided with  
11 the user benefit; and  
12 a memory coupled to the processor, the memory configured to store the  
13 description of the promotion, configured to store the selection of the at least one item.

1           9.       The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the user benefit is selected  
2 from the class: cents off, percent discount, price point, buy X get Y free, solution selling,  
3 promotion content.

1           10.      The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the processor is configured to  
2 receive the description when the user meets target criteria, the target criteria being selected  
3 from the class: targeted user, targeted user demographic, targeted user usage, targeted user  
4 brand, targeted user market.

1           11.      The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the pre-conditions are selected  
2 from the class: purchase of an item, purchase of a quantity of an item, purchase of at least two  
3 different items.

1           12.      The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the processor is configured to  
2 determine a category of items for display for the client system, and configured to request  
3 promotions from the application server in response to the category of items.

1           13.     The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the processor is also  
2 configured to transmit a plurality of items to the client system for display, and configured to  
3 request promotions from the application server in response to the plurality of items.

1           14.     The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the processor is also  
2 configured to receive a selection of a trigger item from the client system, and configured to  
3 request promotions from the application server in response to the trigger item.

1           15.     An application server comprises:  
2           a processor configured to receive an electronic incentive from a central server,  
3 the electronic incentive including a pre-condition and a benefit, configured to receive a  
4 request from a merchant server for electronic incentives, configured to provide a description  
5 of the electronic incentive to the merchant server in response to the request, the description  
6 including a description of the pre-condition and the benefit, configured to receive from the  
7 merchant server a selection by a user of at least one item, configured to determine whether  
8 the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition, and configured to provide the  
9 merchant server with the benefit when the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition;  
10          a memory coupled to the processor configured to store the electronic  
11 incentive, and configured to store a record that the electronic incentive has been used, when  
12 the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition.

1           16.     The application server of claim 15 wherein the request from the  
2 merchant server also includes a description of a shopping category of a user.

1           17.     The application server of claim 15 wherein the request from the  
2 merchant server also includes an indicator of items previously selected by the user or  
3 currently displayed to the user.

1           18.     The application server of claim 15 wherein the pre-condition  
2 comprises purchase of the one item.

1           19.     The application server of claim 15 wherein the request from the  
2 merchant server also includes an identifier of the user.

1                   20.     The application server of claim 15 wherein the processor is also  
2     configured to forward the record that the electronic incentive has been used to a centralized  
3     server.

1                   21.     The application server of claim 15 wherein the application server and  
2     the merchant server are co-located.